



RCO Registration Clinic Handouts

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Additional Handouts:

- **New Rules for RCOs & Neighborhood Meetings with Zoning Applicants**
- **Philadelphia City Planning Commission- “Who are We?”**
- **RCO APPLICATION FORM**
- **Planning Commission Regulations (section regulating RCOs)**
*RCO Application requires that the Applicant has read the Regulations
- **Bill #130657**

1. Community Organizations and RCOs

What's an RCO?

Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with strong community groups have well-informed residents who are able to network, share information, and work together to improve the quality of life in their communities. Having an organized community group also allows a neighborhood to be represented more effectively with local government.

Community organizations can be involved with a great variety of issues such as social services, clean-up campaigns, and community gardens, to name a few. Community organizations that are concerned with the **physical development** of the community can become a “**Registered Community Organization**” (RCO) in order to receive early notification of zoning cases occurring within their stated boundaries.

Why does Philadelphia have RCOs?

The RCO framework was written into the new Zoning Code (in effect August 22, 2012) with the intention to provide a standard and predictable method for community input on development projects throughout the city. A City Council amendment last March changed minimum RCO requirements and notification procedures.

The one-year review of the Zoning Code, which included feedback from many RCOs, revealed a number of issues with the new requirements. The latest law (Bill #130657), which will go into effect March 1, 2014, addresses a number of those issues.

ALL RCOs MUST RE-REGISTER by MARCH 1 to comply with the new regulations. Here are the main changes you should be aware of:

- The criteria for qualifying as an RCO have been expanded.
- RCOs are no longer required to provide written notification to “affected” occupants in the vicinity of the project. (*Zoning applicant provides notification*)
- Only ONE meeting is required with the Applicant and RCO. If there is more than one RCO with boundaries including the project, a “Coordinating RCO” will be appointed by the District Councilperson and will be responsible for providing documentation of the meeting to the City.
- There are no longer any “Issue-Based RCOs”, and “Local RCOs” will be called simply “RCOs”.

You will find more details on the handout: “*New Rules for Registered Community Organizations & Neighborhood Meetings with Zoning Applicants*”.

Remember, ANYONE can testify at a Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) hearing about any particular development project. You don't have to participate in the RCO process to weigh in.

New Application Requirements

ALL existing RCOs must re-register with the City Planning Commission by **MARCH 1**. There is an online form available at www.phila.gov/cityplanning on the RCOs page. Once accepted, an organization's RCO status will be valid for **2 years**, through June 30, 2016.

All new RCOs must meet **all** of the following criteria*:

1. Has an adopted statement of purpose for the organization concerning land use, zoning, or a related subject such as planning, development, revitalization and preservation.

A "statement of purpose" could be the same as the organization's mission statement. This statement should be available for the general membership to see, such as posted on a website.

2. Has a geographic area with no more than 20,000 parcels.

The majority of existing RCOs are less than this size. Planning Commission staff will assist organizations with this calculation. Organizations that identify geographic boundaries exceeding this size will be asked to reduce their stated boundaries.

3. Provides a description of geographic boundaries in the organization's governing rules.

Governing rules describe how the organization is structured—including processes such as how decisions are made. Common issues included are the following: categories of membership and dues; leadership positions, terms, and how they are elected; responsibilities of committees; how meetings are conducted; and how governing rules are changed. The geographic boundaries of the organization's concern are usually stated as street names and their intersections.

4. Has a schedule of regular public meetings.

Well-organized community groups hold regularly-scheduled meetings, in order to maintain communication and increase awareness of issues in the community. A publicly-available schedule also increases membership attendance. Many organizations in Philadelphia meet once a month. The prospective RCO needs to provide either specific meeting dates, or a recurring predictor of regular meetings, such as "first Tuesday night of each month".

5. Provide a copy of a recent announcement of a public meeting.

The organization needs to show evidence of notifying its membership and the public of upcoming meetings. A meeting calendar on the organization's website is a useful way to keep membership updated of scheduled meetings. Other ways to distribute meeting notices include newspaper ads, email blasts, flyers and social media.

6. Has leadership chosen by the membership of the organization-at-large.

A description of how leadership is selected should be in the organization's governing rules. You will be asked to provide the positions of leadership, the names of the individuals who fill each position, and a description of how these positions are filled.

**Neighborhood Improvement Districts, Special Services Districts and Ward Committees automatically qualify for RCOs on submission of a complete application form and don't need to satisfy these criteria. See the "New Rules" handout for definitions of these organizations.*

Tips for Holding a Successful Meeting

To maintain your status as a Registered Community Organization, you need to hold good meetings. If participants do not feel that their time was well spent, you may lose membership and potential contributors' interest. **In general, all good meetings have the following factors in common:** (from: *“How to Build An Effective Neighborhood Association”*, published by the Neighborhood Resource Center.)

- Advance preparation
- An agenda (appropriate for the desired outcome)
- A leader with a positive attitude
- An agreed upon starting and ending time
- The right people present -all stakeholders
- Adequate information
- Clear decisions made, with next steps identified.
- Good practice: distribution of a sign-in sheet so attendees can share their contact information

Sample Agenda:

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction and Announcements
3. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting
4. Committee Reports
5. Guest Speaker Presentations
6. Unfinished Business
 - Unfinished business item 1
 - Unfinished business item 2
7. New Business
 - New business item 1
 - New business item 2
8. Adjourn



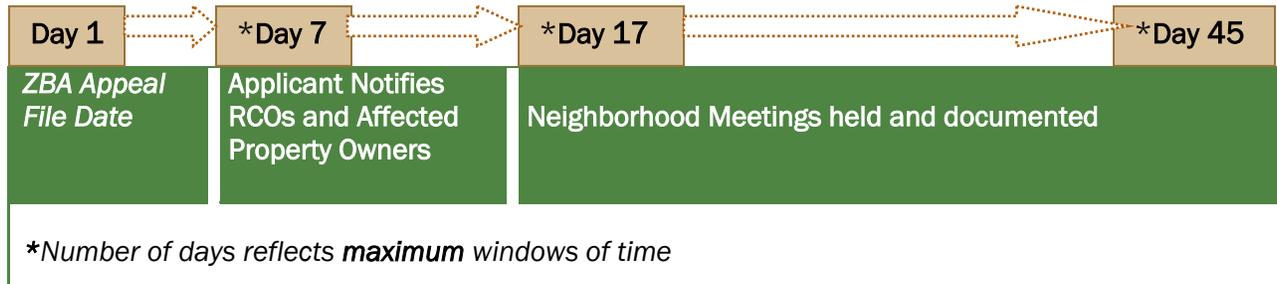
RCO Meetings

Committees play a critical role in organizations. Standing committees for RCOs often include a Zoning Committee, which is responsible for the review of development projects and coordinating the meeting agenda and logistics. Many organizations seek local professionals with expertise in planning and economic development to serve on committees, which is why it's important for an organization to seek a diverse membership.

In cases where a project's location falls within more than one RCO's boundaries, the District Council office will select the RCO that will act as a **“Coordinating RCO”**. This RCO will be responsible for scheduling and hosting the public meeting regarding the applicant's proposal. The Coordinating RCO is also responsible for recording the findings of the meeting and distributing them. (see section “3” for a letter template for RCOs).

All other RCOs whose boundaries overlap the project location will receive notification from the project Applicant with the name of the Coordinating RCO, and the meeting time and place, if that has been set.

2. Process Timeline



Day 1: The date that a zoning applicant files an appeal to appear before the **Zoning Board of Adjustment - ZBA**. *[In the case of Civic Design Review, the date that L&I informs the applicant that CDR is required.]*

Day 7: Deadline for Planning Commission to provide notification information to the zoning applicant. This includes contact information for affected RCOs, a list of affected properties (see *handout “New Rules” for diagram*) and contact information for the district councilmember whose district includes the property.

Day 17: Deadline for Applicant to provide written notification to affected RCOs, affected surrounding property occupants, District Council office and Zoning Board/CDR Committee.

Day 45: Deadline for public neighborhood meeting to be held and documented by the Coordinating RCO.

ZBA hears the case after the public neighborhood meeting has been held,
OR receives documentation of the “good faith effort” to hold a meeting,
OR receives notification from the Coordinating RCO that they decided NOT to hold a meeting for this case.

In the case of **Civic Design Review**, there must be documentation that the applicant has met with the affected RCOs. If there are multiple RCOs, there may be up to two RCO representatives on the Committee for that project. The affected Councilperson may also choose to designate a representative for a seat.

3. Templates for Zoning Applicants & for RCOs

The following pages are suggested letter templates for both Zoning Applicants and RCOs. The Planning Commission staff will provide **zoning applicants** with the contact information for all parties they must notify. These are:

- Each applicable RCO including the RCO that acts as the “Coordinating RCO”, which is responsible for scheduling and hosting the public meeting
- Each property owner on the same block, across the street and within 200 ft of the subject property. (Notification must be via regular mail or hand delivery.)
- The District Councilmember
- The Zoning Board or Civic Design Review Committee, as applicable.

The following templates are suggested for RCOs documenting meetings with zoning applicants:

- 1- For Zoning Board of Adjustment
- 2- For Civic Design Review

Templates for Zoning Applicant:

- 3-Notice from Zoning Applicant to RCOs and Neighboring Property Owners (Coordinating RCO **has** scheduled a public community meeting)
- 4-Notice from Zoning Applicant to RCOs and Neighboring Property Owners (Coordinating RCO **has NOT yet** scheduled a public community meeting)

**MEETING SUMMARY FORM TEMPLATE 1
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

*[Coordinating RCO Name]
[Coordinating RCO Address]
[Coordinating RCO City, State ZIP Code]*

[Date]

Julia Chapman, Chair
Zoning Board of Adjustment
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard – 11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: RCO Meeting Summary Form

*[Calendar No. of ZBA Case]
[Zoning Application No.]
[Project Address]
[Hearing Date and Hearing Time]*

Dear Ms. Chapman:

Below is summary of a public community meeting held regarding the above-referenced zoning proposal.

Position:

- Support
- Oppose
- Non-Opposition
- Did not reach agreement on the application

Date of Meeting:

Location of Meeting:

Participating RCOs:

Number of Attendees:

Reasons for Position: *[Give reasons for position and if there is no agreement or conclusion, discuss the positive and negative aspects].*

Sincerely,
[Coordinating RCO representative]

cc: *[District Councilperson]
[Planning Commission]
[Each affected RCO]*

**MEETING SUMMARY FORM TEMPLATE 2
CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

*[Coordinating RCO Name]
[Coordinating RCO Address]
[Coordinating RCO City, State ZIP Code]*

[Date]

Nancy Rogo Trainer, Chair
Civic Design Review Committee
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: RCO Meeting Summary Form
*[Zoning Application No.]
[Project Address]
[CDR Meeting Date and Time]*

Dear Ms. Rogo Trainer:

Below is summary of a public community meeting held regarding the above-referenced zoning proposal.

Date of Meeting:

Location of Meeting:

Participating RCOs:

Number of Attendees:

Comments related to the Public Realm:

- **Site Design:**
- **Building Design:**
- **Parking Design:**
- **Public Open Space:**
- **Sustainable Design:**

Sincerely,
[Coordinating RCO representative]

cc: *[District Councilperson]
[Planning Commission]
[Each affected RCO]*

**TEMPLATE 3 –Notice from Zoning Applicants to RCOs and Neighboring Property Owners
(Coordinating RCO Has Scheduled the Public Community Meeting)**

*[Name of Applicant]
[Address of Applicant]
[City, State ZIP Code]*

[Date]

Re: *[Property Address]*

ZBA Appeal File Date: _____ OR CDR Referral Date: _____

Dear Registered Community Organization or Property Owner:

You are hereby notified of the following **PUBLIC HEARING** to be held by the City of Philadelphia *[Zoning Board of Adjustment or Civic Design Review Committee]* on the issue described below:

Public Hearing Date: *[Hearing Date]*
Public Hearing Time: *[Hearing Time]*
Location: 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Property Description:
[Add a description of the property by general vicinity, street address, size, nearest cross street, and the zoning district in which the property is located.]

Project Description:
[Add a description of the nature, scope, and purpose of the application. If the hearing is a Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing, describe the type of special exceptions and variances being sought. Indicate where copies of the zoning application and any related information can be obtained.]

All community members and Registered Community Organizations that have geographic boundaries containing the project property are welcome to attend a public community meeting to discuss the project. *[Insert Name of Coordinating RCO]* has scheduled a **PUBLIC COMMUNITY MEETING** in advance of the hearing to discuss the project at the following date, time and location:

Public Community Meeting Date: *[Hearing Date]*
Public Community Meeting Time: *[Hearing Time]*
Location: *[Address, City, State ZIP Code]*

For reference, contact information for all affected Registered Community Organizations and the District Councilperson is provided as follows:

*[District Council Office contact information]
[Each Registered Community Organization's contact information]*

If you have received this notice as the owner, managing agent, or other responsible person at a multi-unit building, you are requested to post this notice at a prominent place in a common area of your building.

Sincerely,
Applicant

cc: *[District Councilperson]
[Planning Commission]
[Each affected RCO including the Coordinating RCO]
[Zoning Board of Adjustment or Civic Design Review Committee]*

**TEMPLATE 4–Notice from Zoning Applicants to RCOs and Neighboring Property Owners
(Coordinating RCO Has Not Yet Scheduled the Public Community Meeting)**

[Name of Applicant]
[Address of Applicant]
[City, State ZIP Code]

[Date]

Re: *[Property Address]*

ZBA Appeal File Date: _____ OR CDR Referral Date: _____

Dear Registered Community Organization or Property Owner:

You are hereby notified of the following **PUBLIC HEARING** to be held by the City of Philadelphia *[Zoning Board of Adjustment or Civic Design Review Committee]* on the issue described below:

Public Hearing Date: *[Hearing Date]*

Public Hearing Time: *[Hearing Time]*

Location: 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Property Description:

[Add a description of the property by general vicinity, street address, size, nearest cross street, and the zoning district in which the property is located.]

Project Description:

[Add a description of the nature, scope, and purpose of the application. If the hearing is a Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing, describe the type of special exceptions and variances being sought. Indicate where copies of the zoning application and any related information can be obtained.]

All community members and Registered Community Organizations that have geographic boundaries containing the project property are welcome to attend a **PUBLIC COMMUNITY MEETING** to discuss the project. A public meeting to discuss this proposal will be convened by *[Insert Name of Coordinating RCO]*, but the date, time, and place of that public meeting has not yet been set. Please contact *[Insert Name of Coordinating RCO]* or your District Councilperson for more information about the public meeting.

For reference, contact information for all affected Registered Community Organizations and the District Councilperson is provided as follows:

[District Council Office contact information]

[Each Registered Community Organization's contact information]

If you have received this notice as the owner, managing agent, or other responsible person at a multi-unit building, you are requested to post this notice at a prominent place in a common area of your building.

Sincerely,
Applicant

cc: *[District Councilperson]*
[Planning Commission]
[Each affected RCO including the Coordinating RCO]
[Zoning Board of Adjustment or Civic Design Review Committee]

4. Contact Information

PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

1515 Arch St, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
RCO@phila.gov
Tel: 215-683-4612
Fax: 215-683-4630

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Boards of Administration
1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd – 11th Flr
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Tanya.sunkett@phila.gov
Hours: M-F 8:30am - 4:00pm
Tel: 215-686-2573
Fax: 215-686-2565

CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

1515 Arch St, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
CDR@phila.gov
Tel: 215-683-4615
Fax: 215-683-4630

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT OFFICES

First District

Councilman Mark Squilla
City Hall, Room 332
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215)686-3458, (215)686-3459
Fax: (215) 686-1931

Second District

Councilman Kenyatta Johnson
City Hall, Room 580
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215) 686-3412, (215) 686-3413
Fax: (215) 686-1932

Third District

Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell
City Hall, Room 408
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-686-3418/3419
Fax: 215-686-1933

Fourth District

Councilman Curtis Jones Jr.
City Hall, Room 404, Philadelphia, PA
(215) 686-3416, (215) 686-3417
Fax: (215) 686-1934

Fifth District

Council President Darrell L. Clarke
City Hall, Room 313
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215) 686-3442, (215) 686-3443
Fax: (215) 686-1901

Sixth District

Councilman Bobby Henon
City Hall, Room 484
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215) 686-3444, (215) 686-3445
Fax: (215) 686-1935

Seventh District

Councilwoman Maria D. Quiñones-Sánchez
City Hall, Room 592
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215) 686-3448, (215) 686-3449
Fax: (215) 686-1936

Eighth District

Councilwoman Cindy Bass
City Hall, Room 594
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215) 686-3424, (215) 686-3425
Fax: (215) 686-1937

Ninth District

Councilwoman Marian B. Tasco
City Hall, Room 577
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290
(215) 686-3454, (215) 686-3455
Fax: (215) 686-1938

Tenth District

Councilman Brian J. O'Neill
City Hall, Room 562
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 686-3422
Fax:(215) 686-1939

5. Online Resources

Planning Commission related:

Philadelphia City Planning Commission- <http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning> NEW PCPC website. You will find many links there on different types of plans, project reviews, zoning resources, as well as downloadable reports, guides, and neighborhood plans.

Click on top tab—“Project Reviews” to find resources for “Zoning”, Civic Design Review”, “Regulations” and “Registered Community Organizations”.

Zoning Administrative Manual (ZAM) is on the Zoning page: Step by step guide for all processes involving zoning.

<http://www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/projectreviews/Pages/Zoning.aspx>. Changes have been made to the design template so that it should be more readable and print faster than previous versions.

Zoning Code “Quick Reference Guide” provides illustrative examples for each zoning district, basic measurements and standards, and categories of allowed uses.

Find zoning links to zoning maps and RCO boundaries and contact persons.

<http://www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/projectreviews/Pages/RegisteredCommunityOrganizations.aspx>

Click on top tab—“Plans” to find links to District Plans, Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan, Central Delaware Master Plan, Lower Schuylkill Master Plan, Community Plans and more...

Philadelphia 2035- <http://phila2035.org>

Website hosted by Planning Commission staff to find information about “Philadelphia2035: the Comprehensive Plan” and the status of the **18 District Plans** being done over the next 5 years. Visit “**Planeto**”- (far right tab) the Planning Department staff’s blog on all things related to Phila2035.



Citizens Planning Institute

<http://citizensplanninginstitute.org/> The Citizens Planning Institute’s mission is to empower citizens to take a more effective and active role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and of Philadelphia, through a greater understanding of city planning and the steps involved in development projects. Six-week course sessions are held twice a year and are filled through an application process

More Zoning:

The Philadelphia CODE— <http://www.amlegal.com/library/pa/Philadelphia.shtml>

The American Legal Publishing Corporation publishes the Official Philadelphia Code. This website provides access to **all titles** of the Philadelphia Code, including the Zoning Code, Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code.

Zoning Maps— <http://www.phila.gov/map>. On the pop-up menu, you will have a menu of maps at your disposal. Scroll down to "Zoning" for the zoning districts and overlays map, or to "RCO" for the RCO map. Take the website's tour to learn how to use the maps for many other types of information.

Zoning Archive- <http://www.phila.gov/zoningarchive>

This service by the Department of Licenses & Inspections offers electronic scans of over 200,000 zoning applications, approved usages, and site drawings dating to the 1930's. Searchable by address.

Licenses and Inspections- <http://www.phila.gov/LI>

"Zoning" tab includes a checklist of when zoning approval is needed. "Appeals" tab shows a calendar where you can click on the specific type of hearing you want more information about on that date—such as ZBA cases being heard. Also searchable by property address.

Other Philadelphia City sites:

City of Philadelphia government home page

<http://www.phila.gov>

City departments, City Council

Business Services Portal- <http://business.phila.gov>

Provides all the information you need from the City to start or grow your business. Incorporates interactive features that allow business owners to apply for licenses, pay taxes, and conduct other business with the City.

Phila. police crime maps and statistics

<http://www.phillypolice.com/about/crime-statistics/>

Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)

<http://www.phila.gov/ohcd/>

Housing initiatives, housing programs and residential developments

Philadelphia Development Authority (PRA)

<http://www.phila.gov/pr/>

Neighborhood stabilization, low-interest loans, properties for sale

New interactive Philadelphia Property Sales site- select city-owned property and apply to buy; find information on selected properties for competitive bidding by all city agencies

Other good sites:

PlanPhilly

<http://planphilly.com/>

News, issues and participation (Penn Praxis/ University of Pennsylvania)

Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)

<http://www.pacdc.org/>

News, policy issues, list of member organizations

Institute for the Study of Civic Values

<http://www.iscv.org/>

Civic education, activism, community building

Social Explorer (census data)

<http://www.socialexplorer.com>

Census data compiled by Queens College of NY

TRF (The Reinvestment Fund) Policymap (online Geographic Information Systems)

<http://www.policymap.com/>

Demographics, real estate data, city crime rates, health data

Data on schools, housing, employment, energy, and public investments

University of Pennsylvania Neighborhood Information System (NIS)

<http://cml.upenn.edu/nis/>

Demographics and data on neighborhoods, crime and murals; tables and maps

Google Maps and Google Earth

<http://maps.google.com/> and <http://www.google.com/earth/index.html>

Street maps, aerial photos, and street view with photos of properties

Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project

<http://mpip.temple.edu>

Community Health Database

<http://www.chdbdata.org>

Everyblock Philadelphia

<http://philly.everyblock.com>

Philadelphia historic photo archive

<http://www.phillyhistory.org/PhotoArchive>

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

<http://www.philageohistory.org/tiles.viewer/>

Run by the Athenaeum Society, wealth of maps and historical information

Researching Property Ownership:

1. Office of Property Assessment database: current assessments, address, name of last recorded owner and date of last recorded deed or transfer:
<http://www.phila.gov/OPA/Pages/PropertyInformation.aspx>
2. If owner lives elsewhere, find the deed which may contain an address at the Department of Records.
3. For apartment buildings and commercial properties, speak directly to property manager or tenants.
4. Also try Water Department's stormwater billing program—most accurate addresses:
www.phila.gov/water/swmap/
5. If owned by the city (1 of 4 agencies), go to www.phila.gov/pr/buyingProperty.html to find listing of parcels for sale.